

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### Forster Tool & Mfg. Co., Inc.

Chicago Manufacturing Center

#### "Going Lean" Leads to Growth for Forster Tool

##### Client Profile:

Forster Tool & Mfg. Co., Inc. provides precision machined parts for a variety of industries and applications, including motion control and instrumentation, medical and dental, sporting goods, electronics, automotive and defense. Founded in 1958, the family-owned company has a loyal customer base that appreciates Forster Tool's ability to anticipate their needs as well as the company's ongoing investment in technology and new machinery. Forster Tool operates out of a 15,000 square-foot facility in Bensenville, Illinois and employs 35 people.

##### Situation:

Forster Tool saw opportunities for growth with its key customers, but faced challenges in meeting their quality, delivery and cost expectation. Forster President, Maureen Forster, said, "China and India were fast becoming our major competitors. We knew we couldn't beat them on labor costs, so we had to find other ways." After hearing about Lean manufacturing concepts from a customer, Maureen took a Forster Tool team to a Lean 101 simulation led by the Chicago Manufacturing Center (CMC), a NIST MEP network affiliate, where they saw how using the appropriate lean tools could lead to operational improvements. Working with CMC, Forster Tool identified several areas of focus for a lean journey. These included existing layout in machining centers inhibiting process flow, set-ups consuming a large portion of available machine time and the root cause of large lot size, and inventory held in finished goods in order to meet key customers' delivery requirements.

##### Solution:

Forster Tool announced to its customers that the company was "Going Lean" with a series of Lean events conducted by CMC. These events included a 3-day training in 5S workplace organization and standardization; a 5-day session on Quick Changeover that introduced employees to effective techniques for reducing set-up times; and a 3-day Kanban workshop to demonstrate how to use actual customer demands to drive production schedules and inventory levels. With assistance from the College of DuPage, a CMC partner, Forster secured a grant from the DuPage County Incumbent Worker Program to support the training costs. The training and implementation assistance provided by CMS positioned Forster for growth and allowed them to better meet customer demands.

##### Results:

- \* Increased sales by 20 percent.
- \* Reduced set-up reduction by 90 percent, from 3 hours to 20 minutes.
- \* Increased on-time delivery from 71 percent to 87 percent.
- \* Received Supplier of the Year Award.

##### Testimonial:

[www.mep.nist.gov](http://www.mep.nist.gov)



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"I can't say enough about what Lean has done for us. I especially like the way the Chicago Manufacturing Center customized the Lean journey to meet our most pressing needs first. Our focus has completely changed. It has made a big difference in our employees and their approach to work. Winning the Supplier of the Year award was a boon for everyone."

Maureen Forster, President